

St Mary's Catholic Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126494
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	340991
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2010
Reporting inspector	Ann Henderson

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Anne Griffin
Headteacher	Mrs Clare-Marie Burchall
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors spent the majority of time looking at learning, visiting 27 lessons and observing 10 teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work. They looked at the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's strategic plan, lesson and curriculum plans, governors' minutes, records held on vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, school policies and the procedures for keeping pupils safe. Inspectors scrutinised questionnaires returned from pupils, staff and 138 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' attainment and progress particularly in Years 1 and 2, and for boys, Black and minority ethnic pupils, and those at an early stage of learning the English
- the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning and progress
- the effectiveness of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and its impact on children's learning and progress
- provision for pupils' cultural development, particularly in the diversity of British society.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average school. The number of pupils attending the school is rising. A large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, a small minority of pupils are from other ethnic groups. The percentage of pupils at an early stage of learning English is above the national average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, most commonly speech and language difficulties, and those with statements of special educational needs is lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is also below average. The school is a dyslexia-friendly school and has several awards including Healthy School status and Activemark. The school runs a breakfast club. There is a pre-school, operated by an independent provider, situated on the school site.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

St Mary's is a good school. It is underpinned by a strong Catholic ethos which is led by the headteacher and promoted by all staff. It has continued to improve since its last inspection and has a number of outstanding features, most notably the way it engages with parents and carers. This can be seen in the very positive responses in their questionnaires. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and live healthy lifestyles. They make an outstanding contribution to the school and wider community through the prefect system, school council and visiting older people in the community. In addition, pupils have an outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness which makes a strong contribution to their sense of responsibility and good behaviour.

Achievement is good overall. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is high and this has been the case for the last three years, particularly in English and mathematics. The national tests in 2009 showed that standards are well above average, particularly for higher achieving pupils. The attainment of pupils at the end of Year 2 is slightly higher than the national average in writing and broadly average in reading and mathematics. This is because the learning and progress of pupils vary across the school. In Years 1 and 2, pupils' progress is slower than in Years 5 and 6. As a consequence, achievement is good rather than outstanding.

Teaching is generally good. However, there are variations in its quality, resulting in the inconsistent learning and progress of pupils across the school. In Years 1 and 2 the pace of some lessons is too slow and activities do not always fully meet the learning needs of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Governors support the staff and pupils well and most know the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, there are a number of new governors and their effectiveness in monitoring the work of the school is less well developed. Senior leaders have a strong commitment to improving outcomes for pupils. Self-evaluation is accurate and most areas of improvement have been identified. Monitoring of teaching and learning is consistent, but does not always identify the rate of progress pupils make in lessons. Nevertheless, the improvements which have been secured since the previous inspection show there is a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the progress made by pupils, particularly in Year 1 and 2 by:

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- ensuring teaching is consistently good, focusing on the individual learning needs of all pupils
- maintaining good pace in lessons
- closely monitoring learning and the rate of progress of pupils in lessons.
- Increase the effectiveness of governors by:
 - ensuring the capacity of newly appointed governors meets the school's needs
 - enabling all governors to monitor more closely the impact of actions taken by the school.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The lessons observed by inspectors showed that pupils develop good learning habits and positive attitudes as they move through the school. Pupils say they enjoy school and lessons are friendly and fun, particularly the 'Marvellous Mondays' where pupils work across year groups in a wide range of creative and problem-solving activities. Good progress was observed in lessons. For example, in some lessons for the oldest pupils in the school, the pupils engaged well, showing good levels of involvement in the tasks. They particularly enjoyed the new technologies which enabled them to 'vote' and make an assessment of their own learning. In Year 6, pupils were able to solve problems relating to angles using prior knowledge of geometry, confidently discussing their thoughts and ideas together. Inspectors found that there was no noticeable difference in the learning and progress of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, Black and minority ethnic pupils or those at an early stage of learning English.

The level of pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) is good. In particular, pupils are confident in the use of ICT, using with proficiency a wide range of programs such as PowerPoint in Year 3, making pictograms in a Year 2 class and using active expression voting as a tool for assessment in Year 6. Their preparation for the next stage in their learning is good and attendance is above average and improving. Pupils of different cultural backgrounds get on well together. They have a good understanding of other cultures around the world. Pupils also have an excellent understanding of right and wrong, showing high levels of respect for themselves and others. Parents too commented on the promotion of 'good moral standards'.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons well. There are examples of exemplary practice, particularly in Years 5 and 6 where teachers use assessment in a highly effective way to inform both planning and teaching, making adjustments to activities during lessons to provide additional challenge, particularly for higher achieving pupils. In a few lessons satisfactory teaching results in pupils making slower progress. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the learning of pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English. As a result, these pupils make good progress.

The curriculum provides a good range of learning opportunities for pupils and additional activities such as ice skating, swimming and involvement in the festivals within a local partnership are enjoyed by many pupils. Good use is made of the school's website and there are various opportunities for pupils to participate in homework activities 'online'. Many parents and carers welcomed the opportunities made available through this ICT resource. The breakfast club provides a healthy breakfast and a calm, pleasant atmosphere for pupils at the start of the school day.

Pupils said they feel well supported by the school and know who to go to if they have a problem. Pupils, parents and carers appreciate the guidance and support provided by all staff and as one pupil put it: 'My school is super because it encourages me to work at my best!' Close liaison between class teachers, teaching assistants and the special educational needs coordinator underpins the good provision for the care and education of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Effective use is made of additional programmes and outside agencies to support learning. An outstanding feature

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of the school's provision is the very good support for the most vulnerable pupils, where highly effective liaison and joint working result in positive outcomes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a clear vision and commitment to raising achievement. The relatively new senior leadership team has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. A variety of strategies has been used to good effect to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to broaden the curriculum. Targets for the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 are challenging and consistently met. Procedures for ensuring the safety and well-being of pupils meet requirements. The school succeeds in tackling discrimination and ensuring that all pupils are valued. Pupils at an early stage of learning English and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are welcomed to the school. The committed chair of governors is aware of the need to improve the skills and expertise of the newest members of the governing body to ensure the work of the school is rigorously monitored. The school makes a good contribution to ensuring a cohesive and harmonious school community and helping pupils to grow up as confident valuable members of their local community. Awareness of other religions and cultures in Britain is somewhat less well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make a good start to their education. Close and positive relationships with parents, carers and pre-schools and the Year 6 buddy system enable children to settle quickly and positively. Children enter the Reception Year with skills that are broadly as expected. They make good progress so that by the time they reach Year 1 their skills and knowledge are above the national average. Their progress in language and communication skills and in the knowledge and understanding of the world are particularly strong. Children feel safe and behave well because of the good knowledge and care of all adults. There have been noticeable improvements since the last inspection. The Reception classes are well resourced, including the outdoor learning area, which provides opportunities for exploration across all areas of learning. However, opportunities for children to select resources independently and make choices for themselves are limited. Teachers plan activities well. Children were particularly excited by the 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' story which was brought to life through messages and posters in the classroom and around the school as they diligently searched for her! Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good, promoting positive attitudes and good teamwork. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive and as one parent commented: 'My child is incredibly happy at school, it is like one big happy family.'

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

In their responses to the questionnaires, the vast majority of parents and carers were very positive about the school. All those who responded agreed that their child enjoyed school and almost all said the school keeps their child safe. They were particularly positive about the focus on their children's health and of the support and care provided, including the progress of their child. A very small minority expressed the view that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. No evidence was found for this by inspectors and it was judged that the school's efforts to communicate with

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parents are outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Mary's Catholic Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 138 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 268 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	102	74	36	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	101	79	36	26	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	70	51	64	46	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	70	51	64	46	3	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	76	55	59	43	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	54	58	42	5	4	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	80	58	56	41	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	65	47	59	43	2	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	64	45	69	50	2	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	70	51	63	46	2	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	58	42	66	48	8	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	84	61	48	35	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	100	72	34	25	2	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



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10 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Swindon SN2 1PE

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your school. We very much enjoyed our visit. We enjoyed discussing your work with you and found your comments very helpful. Your school is a good school.

These are the things we most liked about your school.

- You get a good start to your learning in the Reception classes.
- You enjoy learning, behave very well and work hard in your lessons.
- You have many opportunities to use computers and the internet to support your learning, in school and at home.
- You are polite, friendly and helpful to everyone. You enjoy taking responsibility and have done many things to help to improve your school. You also help people around the world. You show respect for other people's feelings.
- Everyone works together in a strong team and there are excellent partnerships with your parents and carers and others who help you learn.
- All the adults in school look after you very well and you feel safe and happy.

Even though your school is a good school, there are two things that we have asked your headteacher and governors to do to make it even better.

- Help those in Years 1 and 2 to improve their progress in learning and for the headteacher and teachers to check carefully that this is happening .
- For all the new governors you have at your school to understand how well you are doing and to make sure your school improves even more.

Thank you for making our visit so enjoyable. You can help to improve your school too, by always working hard and trying your best in everything you do.

Yours sincerely

Ann Henderson

Lead inspector

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